

MLK Day of Service 2005: A Great Day On!

AmeriCorps and VISTA members throughout Washington State spent MLK Day leading a variety of service projects and creating opportunities for others in the community to volunteer. Below is a sampling of the many wonderful projects that took place this year.

Governor and Mike Gregoire Spent MLK Day Serving With AACYF AmeriCorps

Governor Christine Gregoire and First Gentleman Mike Gregoire spent part of MLK Day serving with AmeriCorps and VISTA members from the AmeriCorps Alliance for Children, Youth, and Families (AACYF). The day was spent providing services for Helping Hands House, a 20-year-old non-profit organization, which addresses the needs of homeless families, through a variety of programs. These programs include emergency housing, home loss prevention and transitional housing. The transitional housing program offers an individually case managed program for families with children, filling the gaps, which contribute their situation. Programs such as education, transportation, and counseling connected with other strategies move them forward to the ultimate goal of permanent housing in the future. AmeriCorps Alliance for Children, Youth and Families Service members placed with Helping Hands House focus on issues such as volunteer recruitment, emergency preparedness and safety.

Governor and Mike Gregoire assisted the members in organizing over two thousand pounds of food, blankets, and other household goods, which had been donated to assist families. The result will allow staff to readily access household goods and food when needed. In addition, they helped a Ready Corps member assemble emergency kits for the homes that Helping Hands House fills. This way, each family will be more prepared to face natural or manmade disasters.



Photo from left: AACYF Director Memory Brock, Governor Gregoire, Helping Hands House Director Nola Renz (in back), AmeriCorps*VISTA Ready Corps member Melody Carlisle, and First Gentleman Mike Gregoire assemble Emergency Kits for families in the transitional housing program.



Photo: Governor Gregoire and AmeriCorps*VISTA Ready Corps member Melody Carlisle sort cans of donated food for Helping Hand House families.

Other MLK Day Projects



Photo: Youth in Service members at the book barn project in Olympia.

In all, 62 **AmeriCorps Youth in Service** members participated in 13 projects in Thurston County, Lewis, Grays Harbor and Pierce Counties, serving more than 955 hours. Some of their projects included: painting a mural and sorting 500 pounds of food at the food bank, preparing rooms for painting at a Habitat for Humanity House, cleaning out garden space at a low-income senior facility, sorting 5,000 book donations for kids, clearing invasive plants at a local park, serving meals through the Feed the Hungry program, and sorting clothing for a local rescue mission and a hospice for low-income citizens.



Sound Youth members participated in the MLK Day celebration at the Seattle Center in partnership with the **Intergenerational Innovations AmeriCorps** team. They made a peace quilt where over 250 local children decorated quilt squares based on inspiration from MLK and their dreams for peace and justice. The event was very well attended and they hope to do it again next year.

VISTA member Lexi Clow and a youth with her quilt square.

To celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day and in collaboration with the Skagit County Community Action Agency (SCCAA), the **Campus Compact Washington Reading Corps** team served county-wide community members in need of assistance. The 20 AmeriCorps and VISTA members performed specific chores identified and requested by homebound individuals recruited by the Community Action Agency. The service project was followed by a reflection activity.

In Port Angeles, the members from **Clallam AmeriCorps** created two murals. The murals were created to depict the ideals of Dr. King. One is located at a new homeless shelter specifically for teens in Port Angeles, and the other is installed at the public swimming pool. This AmeriCorps team also spent part of the holiday acquiring food donations to prepare a meal for the teens at the shelter this month.

The AmeriCorps team at **ESD 112** completed a series of workshops and service projects, with several service projects and workshops occurring at the same time. The workshops included understanding racism, nonviolent communication, immigrant issues in the community, and a historical look at the civil rights movement. Service projects included mural painting, serving with the community cycling center, and working on a juvenile justice team.

In Longview, the **Cowlitz AmeriCorps** members conducted outreach to local elderly, disabled and shut-ins. They went out in teams of 2-3 to a series of pre-scheduled visits. Their visits included conversation, light chore assistance, games, music and activities which were offered either in resident's homes or at local assisted living centers, nursing homes and retirement communities. Members also created crafts including bookmarks, coasters, and handmade note cards, so they could leave a special gift with each person they encountered.

The **Federal Way AmeriCorps** team collaborated with the Diversity Commission and the City of Federal Way to hold a clothing and food drive, with proceeds donated to the Multi Service Center. They also held an event at a local high school to honor the community and students for their involvement in service.

In Seattle, the **EarthCorps** and **City Year AmeriCorps** teams served together on a project to remove invasive plants. They recruited and served with dozens of community volunteers on the project. Their service will enhance the development of the natural processes in this urban park and be a benefit to both the wildlife and the community.

Members at the **Hood Canal Watershed Project** held a work party to plant 2000 trees around Quilicene in the Tarbo River Watershed. For this project they are collaborating with 60 families in this community and with the Northwest Watershed Institute.

The **Youth Connection AmeriCorps Program** team collaborated with the Snohomish County YMCA and Everett Community College to participate in the annual MLK Day March and speaker event.

The members serving with the **Fremont Public Association** teams held a huge food drive just after MLK Day to help the local food banks, which are in desperate need of donations this time of year. The theme for their event was "The Poor People's Movement and Hunger." In addition to collecting food, they provided the opportunity to have local low-income organizers and community leaders speak to the members about the poor people's movement and hunger issues locally. Members also served on a variety of other service projects on MLK Day.